

## **Surviving the Lockdown Away from Home**

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On May 1, Central Government announced extension of the lockdown by two more weeks for the third time since March 24. Lockdown 3.0 – as media has termed it, has been imposed keeping in mind the safety of people and to contain the spread of the novel Corona virus or Covid-19. However, this time, different set of guidelines have been issued after splitting the districts into red, orange and green zones based on the severity of the spread. Another significant step taken before announcing the extension was the provision to run special trains to take stranded workers, tourists, students home. Lakhs of migrant workers finally felt relieved after surviving 5 weeks of uncertainty. Their plight, undoubtedly, is way beyond the miseries faced by people who are stranded in safe places with lesser challenge to survive but as they say - “We’re all in the same game, just different levels. Dealing with same hell, just different devils” – this lockdown has not been easy for any of us.

I was in Chandigarh - my hometown, when the news of spread of COVID-19 in other countries had slowly started seeping in. India also reported a positive case by the end of January. Life was going on as usual and no one seemed to be alarmed by the whole situation. I had to travel to Delhi a week before the first Janta curfew and was staying at my friend’s house. Within a week, the situation flipped. Cases started pouring in from different states and I had stopped stepping out following the guidelines. Constant news feed about intensity of the spread in Italy was worrisome and I could sense that India might also follow the lockdown. Looking back at it now, I feel I should have gone back to my house that moment itself.

March 22 was announced as the first Janta curfew which was immediately followed by a complete lockdown. By the time I realised I should go back home - it was too late. As I write this, it’s been almost 2 months that I haven’t seen my parents, my grandfather and my pets and I am not exaggerating when I say that a lot has changed. On April 5, my grandfather passed away in his sleep and I have been waiting for a closure since then. The feeling of homesickness has grown stronger now. I really want to return to my place and sit on my grandfather sahib’s bed, and relish the memories of the times we have spent together . I want to be with my father and talk to him as he lost both the parents in a span of two years.



*One of the Last Pictures with My Grandfather sahib*

If only someone would have told me that things will turn this bad with no end to lockdown, I would have gone back home before the curfew started. Although, I think of walking back home but I do not possess that courage like our migrant workers.

This lockdown has given me a lot of time to think, to overthink. Some days are good with positive thoughts about the future while some are really depressing. Amidst this seesaw of emotions, I never forget to acknowledge how blessed I am to be in the company of my friend and his family who are generous enough to make me feel comfortable in these tough times.

While writing, as I look out of the window, I see birds drinking water from the vessel kept outside. Mother Earth is rejuvenating and I think that is the only positive side about this lockdown. With human's locked inside, the earth is healing and this thought helps me overcome my misery. Hopefully, I will see my family soon!